

Harris County Citizen Participation Plan

Future Effort in Citizen Participation

The participation of citizens and professionals is crucial to the process of planning for a community. Even after the adoption of a plan, it is important that avenues be made available for necessary changes or additions. Harris County residents will be encouraged to participate throughout all stages of planning, review, and execution of community development activities.

The Citizen Participation Plan emphasizes the involvement of low-income residents including non-English speaking persons, as well as persons with mobility, visual or hearing impairments. The Plan outlines the process through which the public can access general information, receive technical assistance, provide comments on critical issues, and receive timely responses to questions raised.

The Harris County Community Services Department (CSD) is the responsible entity for overseeing the development of the plan and any significant aspects of the process by which the consolidated plan was developed.

Following the adoption of the 5-Year Consolidated Plan, a minimum of two public hearings will be held during each program year. The public will have access to the Harris County Community Services Department (CSD) plans and records under the Texas Open Records Act. Plans will be amended as necessary throughout all stages of the planning and implementation process by proper amendment procedures. In addition, all public complaints will be documented and considered. Technical assistance will be made available through the CSD main office during regular business hours.

Encouragement of Citizen Participation

Obtaining the input of citizens, professionals, and other governmental entities is of the utmost importance not only during the development of community plans, but also within the Consolidated and Action Plan planning process itself. Effectively planning for a community would be difficult, if not impossible, without the support of its residents, especially low-income citizens directly affected by community development projects and programs. It is for these reasons that citizen participation is strongly encouraged throughout the processes of neighborhood revitalization planning, short and long range departmental planning, and plan implementation.

The primary goal of this Citizens Participation Plan is to provide all citizens of the community with adequate opportunity to participate in an advisory role in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the Consolidated Plan. The Plan details the proposed use of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), and other funding sources.

The Plan also sets forth policies and procedures for citizen participation, which are designed to maximize the opportunity for citizen participation in the community development process. Special emphasis has been placed on encouraging participation by persons of low-incomes, residents in target areas, and residents of areas where community development funds are utilized. Additionally, emphasis shall be placed on obtaining participation from public housing authorities, residents of subsidized housing, non-English speaking persons, minorities, and persons with disabilities.

Citizen participation efforts will be encouraged in the future through similar avenues as have been employed in the 2008 Long Range Consolidated Planning process. CSD used methods such as surveys, and public notices, focus group meetings, workshops, the Housing Resource Center and other more innovative approaches. In the future, due to the diversity of Harris County residents, when needed, translators will be made present at future public hearings and community meetings.

Consultation with Outside Departments and Organizations

Based on requirements of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Harris County must develop and submit its 3-5 year Consolidated Plan. To assist CSD staff to develop this plan, outside departments and organizations will be contacted for consultation. These will include but are not limited to: non-profits, business organizations, public institutions, and for-profit developers

In the case of developing homeless strategies to address the needs of homeless persons, particularly chronically homeless individuals and families, families with children, veterans and their families, and unaccompanied youth, and persons at risk of homeless, CSD will consult with:

- Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County, the local Continuum of Care,
- Public and private agencies that address housing, health, social services, victim services, employment, and or education needs for low-income individuals and families,
- Publicly funded institutions and systems of care that may discharge persons into homelessness (such as health-care facilities, mental health facilities, foster care and other youth facilities, and corrections programs and institutions), and
- Business and civic leaders.

Furthermore, as Harris County is a jurisdiction that received an Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) from HUD, CSD must consult with the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County, the local Continuum of Care, in determining how to allocate its ESG grant for eligible activities, in developing the performance standards for and evaluating the outcomes of projects and activities assisted by ESG funds and in developing funding, policies, and procedures for the operation and administration of the HMIS.

In the case of public facilities and infrastructure, CSD has formed a partnership with the Harris County Public Infrastructure Department (PID). This partnership brings to CSD's

project evaluation and monitoring a greater level of engineering expertise. From the onset, potential public facilities and infrastructure projects from CSD's Request for Proposals process are evaluated and then monitored by CSD and PID staff for proper planning/design and construction management.

For housing strategies, CSD – during the development of the Consolidated Plan – will consult with the local Public Housing Authority (PHA), non-profit housing providers, and for-profit housing developers, particularly those who serve low-income households in Harris County's service areas. The jurisdictions shall make an effort to provide information to the PHA about consolidated plan activities related to its developments and surrounding communities so that the PHA can make this information available at the annual public hearing required for the PHA Plan.

Meetings and Public Hearings

CSD will participate in a series of meetings, focus groups and a public hearing throughout the county as needed to publicize the Consolidated Plan process by securing input from citizens, CDCs, CHDOs and other interested groups about the planning process. We also solicited information about community problems through a Needs Assessment Process, and assessed the progress of the department in securing improvements in low-income areas.

In each program year, a minimum of two public hearings will be held. Citizens and other interested persons will be encouraged to attend these meetings. An applicants conference will be held prior to the Request for Proposal (RFP) process in the spring of each program year. In addition, a public hearing will be held in preparation for the Annual Action Plan in the fall of each program year. This will give citizens a chance to express their needs during the development of the plan. A public hearing is also held before the submission of the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) to solicit comments on the CSD accomplishments during the year and where there may be areas of improved.

Public hearings may be publicized:

- Approximately one month in advance of meeting dates.
- Provide a phone number on flyers and press releases to contact Harris County representatives for additional information and/or for special needs for the disabled persons wishing to attend the hearing.
- In English, Spanish, and other languages, as necessary.
- Through local newspaper (s) of wide distribution.
- On CSD internet website

The public hearing will include a brief introduction by CSD and offer a forum for discussion of the relevant plans or community development topics. Participants will have an opportunity to express their opinions on CSD activities, the housing and community development needs of Harris County, and any other community development related items. At all public hearings, an interpreter will be available for those who do not speak

or understand English upon request of at least two business days prior to each hearing. A translator for the hearing impaired will be available upon the advanced request of at least three business days prior to each hearing.

During the Consolidated and Annual Planning processes, the public will have 30 days (15 days for the CAPER) to make comments on the plans before they are submitted to Harris County Commissioners Court for approval. Comments will be recorded according to meeting or hearing date. Comments will be considered and changes will be made if and when necessary. A summary of these comments and any resulting changes will be included in the citizen participation component of the final plan.

Consolidated Plan Amendments

CSD is required to amend components of the Consolidated Plan or Action Plan whenever it adds an activity, deletes an activity or substantially changes the purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries of an activity.

Major Amendments

A major change in a planned or actual activity requires an amendment to the Consolidated Plan or Action Plan. A major, or substantial, amendment is defined as the following:

1. When an activity or objective is deleted or added.
2. When there is a change in a goal or scope of the project.
3. When the dollar amount allocated to a project changes by more than 25 percent.

Citizens will be provided at least 30 days to comment on the original Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan proposed major amendment(s). Barring any changes made due to citizen comment, the amendment will then be presented to Commissioner's Court. Upon approval, the change will be added to the Consolidated Plan or Action Plan in an appendix specifically designated for major amendments and applied to future activities. All comments obtained during the amendment review period will be added to the citizen comments section of the Consolidated/Action Plan.

Minor Amendments

Minor amendments represent any changes to the Consolidated Plan or Action Plan that do not qualify as "substantial amendments," and are more than one percent change in funding including correction of errors in the original plan. Minor amendments do not require a 30-day public review period but do require court approval.

One-Percent Amendments

A one-percent amendment represents any change in the funded amount of a project that is one-percent or less change. These amendments require the signature of the CSD director or designated representative, but do not require public notice of 30 days or court action.

Actions to Minimize Displacement

Harris County's policy states "the permanent displacement of homeowners, tenants, businesses, non-profit corporations or farms is discouraged. If permanent displacement is necessary, it must comply with federal regulations."

Relocation Process must comply with the following:

- Harris County will follow the requirements of the Uniform Relocation Act (URA) or Section 104 (d) of the 1974 Community Development Act, as amended. These requirements provide for uniform, fair and equitable treatment of persons whose real property is acquired or who are displaced in connection with federally funded projects.
- In the case of temporary and voluntary displacement, Harris County or their subrecipient will inform program participant of relocation services available. Commonly the information is distributed by flyer to homeowners or tenants, who are receiving rehabilitation services.
- If permanent displacement is necessary, homeowners, tenants, businesses, farms, or non-profits that occupy the site of the CDBG-assisted project will be identified through tax records and/or visual inspection and informed by certified letter.
- Harris County or their subrecipient will serve as liaison between program participant, contractor, landlords, movers, etc. to ensure a problem free transition. The Harris County or their subrecipient will identify and accommodate the displaced household or business when possible as to their need or preference for a particular unit size and location. These will be determined in the in-take process for relocation services.
- Harris County or subrecipients submits necessary documentation to secure relocation payments.
- Relocation evaluation form is forwarded to program participant to evaluate the success of the relocation.
- If complaints arise Harris County program administrators, their subrecipient and the program participant will enter into informal complaint resolution
- Documenting relocation services and maintaining files on each program participant by Harris County subrecipients.

Neighborhood Revitalization Planning

In CSD target areas deemed to have the greatest need and potential for improvement, the CSD planning team will prepare Neighborhood Revitalization Strategies and plans, which outline community assets and liabilities, identify potential sources and/or locations of community improvements, and set forth planning strategies for improving the quality of life for the neighborhood.

Citizen participation is a vital component in the process of formulating planning strategies for neighborhoods. Through community meetings, charettes, workshops, and surveys, the opinions of neighborhood residents and business persons are recorded and applied in the process of planning for neighborhood initiatives, priorities, and timelines. Once community plans have been finalized, participants from the community are assisted by planning staff to implement the planning directives.

Approximately one to two target areas per year are anticipated to be targeted by CSD for neighborhood revitalization planning.

Access to Records

In accordance with the Texas Public Information Act, government records will be made available to the public. To ensure consistent cooperation with public requests, CSD employees will maintain awareness and knowledge of laws pertaining to open records.

Guidelines for Obtaining Information

1. A written request must be submitted to the main office of the Harris County Community and Economic Development Department by mail, fax, email, or in person.
2. The description of information requested must be written in enough detail to enable CSD employees to accurately identify and locate the items requested.
3. The requestor must cooperate with CSD's reasonable efforts to clarify the type or amount of information requested.

Upon written request, information that is not confidential by law, or for which an exception to disclosure has been sought, will be promptly released (and translated when necessary). This includes all Long Range Consolidated Plans, Annual Action Plans, Performance Reports (CAPER's), neighborhood plans, and plan amendments. All requestors will be treated equally, including accommodation in accordance with ADA requirements. In the case that plans and reports cannot be promptly mailed to requestors, a date within a reasonable time will be established for delivery or pick-up of the document(s). If the request is for materials/plans exceeding \$40, a cost estimate will be made and communicated to the requestor, who must make a written commitment to pay the costs prior to finalizing the request.

A ruling from the Office of the Attorney General and County Attorney will determine if any information will be withheld from the public. Confidential documents will be set apart from public information, and any requestors of this information will be promptly informed of the ruling. Third parties will be informed if a request is made for their proprietary information. Furthermore, CSD will respond in writing to all written communications from the General Services Commission or the Office of the Attorney General regarding complaints about violations of the Act.

Procedures for Inspecting and Copying Public Information

Any CSD information not withheld from the public by a ruling from the Office of the Attorney General will be available for the public to inspect or copy. If a copy request is made, the copies will be promptly sent by mail, fax, or email. If, however, the copy request exceeds \$40, a cost estimate will be made and communicated to the requestor, who must make a written commitment to pay the costs prior to finalizing the request.

Publication of Materials

Upon finalization, departmental planning document summaries will be published in a major newspaper (Houston Chronicle) or made available via the internet. These include but are not limited to Long Range Consolidated Plans, Annual Action Plans, Performance Reports, Neighborhood Revitalization Strategies, and Public Housing Authority Plans.

Public Grievances

In the case that a citizen or organization desires to file a formal complaint against a CSD action or decision, they will be informed of the following set of formal grievance procedures:

1. Submission of the complaint must be sent to the Director of CSD, with original signatures and letterhead (if applicable). The complaint must include details such as dates, procedures in question, history of the problem(s) and correspondence, and any relevant previous complaints.
2. The complaint will then be given to the staff for a formal investigation.
3. Staff will investigate the situation and draft a report to the Director, which will detail all findings related to the action or decision, such as historical background, persons involved in the action or decision, the reasoning behind the action or decision, and suggestions for reconciliation (if any).
4. The individual or organization that filed the original complaint will be contacted and informed of the findings and applicable plan for reconciliation within 15 business days of receipt of the complaint.
5. Any legal suits against CSD must be served to or filed with the County Judge at 1001 Preston Suite 911, Houston, Texas 77002.
6. Grievances regarding housing discrimination should be reported to the Houston HUD Office at 1301 Fannin, Ste. 2200, Houston, TX 77002.

Technical Assistance

Technical Assistance is provided to applicants and sub-recipients of grant funds, communities for which Neighborhood Revitalization Strategies and plans have been drafted, and other organizations and communities as requested.

At the beginning of the Request for Proposals (RFP) process, technical assistance shall be provided to applicants in the form of grants applications, identified deadlines, and detailed verbal and written guidelines for applying for CBDG, HOME, and ESG grant funds. CSD staff continues to provide technical assistance to applicants throughout the application process by providing explanation and clarification as necessary.

During the year, technical assistance is provided to sub-recipients, including instances where projects or programs are experiencing difficulties. When clients, sub-recipients, or CSD discovers problems such as program glitches and budget discrepancies, they are addressed and resolved in coordination with CSD. Additional questions are addressed from individuals and organizations wanting information, such as how to establish a non-profit organization or apply for federal grant funds.

Performance Reports

Per consolidated planning requirements, on an annual basis CSD will submit the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) which reports the county's performance in expending entitlement funds for the previous one year period. Citizens will be provided at least 15 days to comment on performance reports. Additionally, the CAPER will be reviewed at a public hearing held prior to its submission to HUD. Citizen comments received in writing during the public review period or orally at public hearings shall be attached to the CAPER.

The report shall include an evaluation of the jurisdiction's progress in meeting its specific objective of providing affordable housing, including the number and types of families served, with respect to extremely low-income, low-income, moderate-income, middle-income, and homeless persons served. The report will include an evaluation of the jurisdiction's progress in meeting its specific objectives for reducing and ending homelessness through outreach and assessment; emergency and transitional shelter; and permanent housing, homeless prevention, and rapid re-housing.

Since CSD received an ESG, the report will include the number of persons assisted, the types of assistance provided, and the project or program outcomes data measured under the performance standards developed in consultation with the Continuum(s) of Care (once those standards are developed).

Citizen Participation in Creating the 2008-2012 Consolidated Plan

To identify the nature and level of needs within Harris County, a community survey was distributed to residents and organizations in our target areas, cooperative cities, citizen groups, service organizations, non-profit organizations, civic clubs, and citizen groups operating in Harris County. The community survey was completed by citizens and organizations throughout the county including all the precinct areas. A series of focus group meetings were also held in each precinct.

The community survey reflects the needs and concerns of Harris County. The survey was created to evaluate existing conditions, concerns and opinions, and recorded the level of concern for issues in Housing, Social Services, Transportation, Senior Services, Children/Youth Services, Parks, Homelessness, Public Facilities/Infrastructure, Health, and Education.

Focus group meetings were held at the precinct level to help identify and evaluate characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses of the four precincts. The results of the meetings helped us recognize the needs, goals, and objectives of the services needed in Harris County.

In an effort to broaden public participation in the development of the Consolidated Plan, CSD efforts for participation included personal and telephone interviews, focus groups, and surveys distributed at meetings, seminars, workshops and trainings in the areas listed below.

Table 2.1 Consultation Checklist

24CFR	Requirement	Consulted
91.100(a)(1)	Housing Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Social Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Fair Housing Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Health Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Homeless Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
91.100(a)(2)	Chronically Homeless	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
91.100(a)(3)	Lead-based Paint	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
91.100(a)(4)	Adjacent Government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	State (Non-housing)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	County (Metro city)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
91.100(a)(5)	Metro Planning Agencies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
91.100(b)	HOPWA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
91.100(c)	PHA Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

In addition to the organizations that HUD required that we consult with as part of the Public Participation process, we met with representatives from the following disciplines to further our efforts in identifying the needs within Harris County.

- Education
 - University of Houston
 - Texas Southern University
 - San Jacinto College
 - Lee College
 - Lone Star College (formerly known as North Harris Montgomery Community College)
 - Harris County Public Education Department
- Health Services
 - Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services
 - Harris County Hospital District
- Senior Service Providers elderly service provider network
 - Elder Services Provider Network
 - United Way Interagency Network Meeting
- Youth Service Providers
 - East Harris County Youth
 - Street Olympics
 - Children's Assessment Center
- Housing
 - Harris County Housing Resource Center
 - Greater Houston Builders Association
 - Independent Living Centers
 - Multi-family and Senior Housing Developers
 - Harris County Public Housing Authority
 - Gulf Coast Community Services Association (Fair Housing Program)
- Homelessness
 - Coalition for the Homeless Houston/Harris County
 - Houston/Harris County Homeless Collaborative
 - Healthcare for the Homeless
 - SEARCH
- Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Harris County Public Infrastructure Department
 - Harris County CSD Transportation Division
 - Bay Area Transportation
- Economic Development
 - Various Chambers of Commerce
 - Economic Development Organizations
- Public Facilities
 - Harris County Precinct's Parks Departments
 - Local Cities
- Intergovernmental Coordination and Partnerships
 - Harris County Precinct's
 - Local Cities
 - Target Area CDC's
 - Various Harris County Department's
 - Houston-Galveston Area Council MPO

The information obtained through this process was one of several primary considerations in the development of goals and objectives for each planning element described in the Strategic Plan section of the 2008 Consolidated Plan.

CSD staff also met with local engineers involved in working with MUDs in local low-income communities. This meeting highlighted the need for sewer and water rehabilitation in the areas of Cloverleaf, Barrett Station, McNair, Linus, Aldine/Greenwood, and other small communities in east Harris County.

Once the Plan draft was completed, the plan was made available to the public through the internet, and advertised in the major publications, Houston Chronicle, that the document was under review. The 2008 Consolidated Plan, complete with the 2008 Annual Action Plan was published in the Houston Chronicle on October 22, 2007. The public notice informed Harris County residents about the public hearing.

During the following 30-day public review period, comments and suggestions were recorded and considered for addition and/or revision to the plan. In addition, a public hearing was held on November 14, 2007 in which Harris County residents voiced their opinions on the Consolidated Plan and the 2008 Annual Action Plan. The PY2006 CAPER was also available for review. All comments recorded during the public review period and public hearing was then added to the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan (see Appendix D).

Community Survey

Four different surveys were developed and used as part of our Citizen Participation process: 1). General Community Survey which included questions relating to Housing, Social Services, Transportation, Senior and Youth Services, Parks, Public Facilities, Public Services, Infrastructure, Homelessness, and Education 2). Senior Service Providers Survey focused on the needs of seniors 3). Homeless Providers Survey focused on the needs of the homeless population; and 4). Senior and Disabled Housing Providers Survey focused on housing needs for seniors and disabled persons. These surveys were developed to help us identify the needs, goals, and objectives of the services needed in Harris County.

The opinions of Harris County residents on what problems exist at the neighborhood level are of utmost importance when drafting needs statements, goals and objectives, and strategies for building better communities. To this end, the survey was conducted by target area residents throughout the CSD service area, social service providers, homeless care providers, cooperative cities, and nonprofits. The surveys revealed the following results:

Table 2.2 General Community Survey Results

Category	Top 5 Priorities
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Time Homebuyer Program • Homebuyer Education • Affordable Rental Housing • Senior Housing • Homeowners Rehabilitation
Social Services Building Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelters • Youth Center – Sports • Clinics • Youth Center – Art/Music/Computers/Education • One Stop Shop for all Social Service Programs
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More transit options (bus, light rail, commuter rail) • Sidewalks • Change Bus Routes • Hike/Bike Trails • Bus Shelters
Senior Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Day Programs (trips, activities) • Prescription Drug Program • Meals-on-Wheels • Transportation for Seniors • Vision/Hearing Program
Children/Youth Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Training/Mentoring • Medical/Dental Program • Sports Programs • Affordable Day Care Program • Teen Parenting
Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Sports Facilities (skate park, sports fields) • Playground Equipment • Hike/Bike Trail • Neighborhood Parks • Additional Green Space
Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling • Crisis Intervention Center • Coordination of Services at one place • Women’s Shelter • Teen Shelter
Public Facilities/ Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads • Water Lines • Sewer Lines • Sidewalks • Crisis Intervention Center
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescription Drug Program

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinics • Nutrition • Dental Program • Preventative Care
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Training • Homebuyer Education • Crisis Intervention • Art/Music/Computer/Other Education • Nutrition Counseling

Table 2.3 Senior Providers Survey Results

Category	Top 5 Priorities
Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retirement & Nursing Facilities • Affordable Senior <u>only</u> Rental Housing • Down payment & Closing Cost Assistance • Affordable Rental Housing • Home Repair
Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelters • Crisis Intervention Center • ADA Accessibility to Buildings • One Stop Shop for all of Social Service Programs • Seniors
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change Bus Routes • New Roads • Sidewalks • More Transit Options (buses, light rails, commuter rail) • Bus Shelters
Senior Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision/Hearing Program • Transportation for Seniors • Adult Day Programs (trips, activities) • Prescription Drug Program • Meals-on-Wheels Program
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis Intervention • Health Education • Counseling • Preventative Care • Nutrition

Table 2.4 Homeless Providers Survey Results

Category	Priorities
Housing	Reasons that lead to homelessness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol/substance abuse • Unemployment • Low Wages • Unable to pay rent/mortgage • Family rejection
Social Services	Services most important to homeless <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary Shelter • Food • Medical • Permanent Housing • Clothing
Benefits	Which do most homeless receive? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Stamps • Medicaid • SSI • Social Security • Work Income
Shelter Types	Average length of time people remain homeless <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 months

Table 2.5 Senior and Disabled Housing Providers Survey Results

Category	Results
Occupancy Rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 98 to 100 % occupancy rate
# On waiting list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average of 10 to 20 people on the waiting list. • Average wait is 6 mos. to a year
Demand for units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High demand for units. Average of 5 to 10 calls per day
Amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise facility, library, laundry facility, meeting rooms, pool, patio
Partner Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HUD, National Church Residences Org., Houston Housing Management Corp.

Focus Group Meetings

As part of the citizen participation process the focus group meetings were held at the precinct level to help identify and evaluate characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses of the four precincts in Harris County. Community leaders were invited to discuss topics in Healthcare, Education, Business, Quality of Life, Transportation, Crime, Infrastructure, and Economic Development. These meetings were held over a thirty day period and were attended by local chamber of commerce organizations, industry leaders, university

presidents, jurisdictions, cities, local government, health care groups, council members, city managers, civic leagues, banks, nonprofit organizations, and the local independent school districts.

The results of the meetings helped us identify the critical issues facing Harris County and each of its four precincts. A brief outline of these issues is as follows:

Precinct One Issues

1. Low educational attainment of residents will cause concerns about workforce capabilities
2. Aging infrastructure will need to be upgraded
3. Perceived lower quality of life than the western part of Harris County
4. Growing blighted areas need to be redeveloped
5. Perceived lower quality of life than the western part of Harris County

Precinct Two Issues

1. Need to revitalize older urban and blighted areas
2. Security concerns related to petrochemical industries and the Port of Houston
3. Aging infrastructure
4. Weather concerns (exposure to hurricanes, susceptibility to flooding) can affect industry location
5. Low educational attainment of residents will cause concerns about workforce capabilities

Precinct Three Issues

1. Persistent workforce shortages in certain key vocations and occupations
2. Imbalance in the types of available housing
3. Need for increased commercial tax base
4. Need for light/commuter rail
5. Challenge to keep infrastructure build ahead of demand

Precinct Four Issues

1. Significant losses of green space and parks to sprawling development
2. Growing urban blight in older suburban areas
3. Large unincorporated areas not covered by Economic Development Organizations
4. Imbalance in the types of available housing
5. Lack of public transportation

The results of the meetings will help us recognize the needs, goals, and objectives of the services needed in Harris County and are a part of the Consolidated Plan.

CSD also facilitated and coordinated a Medical Focus Group to help identify medical services for the homeless population in Houston/Harris County. This focus group created

strategies to address healthcare needs for homeless person, particularly the chronically homeless. The agencies that participated included:

- Harris County Mental Health Mental Retardation (MHMRA)
- Harris County Hospital District (HCHD)
- Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services (HCPHES)
- City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS)
- Houston Veterans Administration Hospital
- Healthcare for the Homeless-Houston
- Coalition for the Homeless
- United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast
- Montrose Counseling Center
- Baylor College of Medicine
- Harris County Hospital District
- University of Texas

Public Hearing/Public Review Period

A Public Hearing was held on November 14, 2007 in which Harris County residents and organizations were encouraged to ask questions and give comments regarding the 2008-2012 Consolidated Plan, the 2008 Action Plan, and the 2006 Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER). The public hearing was held during the 30 day public review period and was announced on the CSD website (www.CSD.hctx.net) and in the Houston Chronicle (see figure 2-2). Public comments received during the 30-day public review period (including the public hearing) are listed in Appendix D.

Figure 2-2: Public Notice/Hearing Published in Houston Chronicle, October 22, 2007